

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-131 (canceled).

132. (new) A method of managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, comprising:

loading a bill of material file into said computer network;

processing said bill of material file;

generating a bid request from said bill of material file;

transmitting said bid request to a web site;

receiving at least one bid response by said at least one supply chain entity;

analyzing said bid response;

generating an award notice;

transmitting said award notice to said at least one supply chain entity, based upon results of said analyzing;

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the at least one supply chain entity that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by the manufacturing enterprise under an agreement with the at least one supply chain entity;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the at least one supply chain entity with purchase prices available to the manufacturing enterprise for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the at least one supply chain entity incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise, generating and

transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the at least one supply chain entity to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise;

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the at least one supply chain entity, the authorization letter authorizing the at least one supply chain entity to purchase the component directly from the component supplier; and

tracking selected activities in a log.

133. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes mapping items contained in said bill of material file from said manufacturing enterprise with items provided by external sources via said network.

134. (new) The method of claim 133, wherein said items contained in said bill of material file include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

135. (new) The method of claim 133, wherein said items provided by said external sources include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

136. (new) The method of claim 133, wherein said external sources include:

a database of said manufacturing enterprise;

a data warehouse; and

a technical manual.

137. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes automatically transmitting notifications to an administrative entity of said manufacturing enterprise via said network.

138. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein said network is an extranet.

139. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein said analyzing said bid response includes comparing data contained in said bill of material file with data contained in said bid response.

140. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein said supply chain entity is a contract manufacturer.

141. (new) The method of claim 133, wherein the mapping includes mapping component information to at least one commodity.

142. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein the request comprises:

part numbers subject to authorization;

descriptions of the part numbers;

component volumes; and

contract price per unit.

143. (new) The method of claim 132, wherein the affirmative response by the component supplier includes a notification indicating approval of the request.

144. (new) The method of claim 140, wherein the authorization letter comprises an attachment comprising:

guidelines for the contract manufacturer to follow, comprising:

keeping pricing information confidential for a period of time;

the authorization is restricted to part numbers provided with the authorization letter; and

providing copies of purchase orders between the contract manufacturer and the component supplier to the buyer for tracking and reconciliation purposes; and

a request to provide a production bill of materials that factors in revisions to the purchase prices of components that reflect the purchase price available to the buyer.

145. (new) A method of managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, comprising:

loading a bill of material file into said computer network;

processing said bill of material file;

generating a bid request from said bill of material file;

transmitting said bid request to a web site;

receiving at least one bid response by said at least one supply chain entity;

analyzing said bid response;

generating an award notice;

transmitting said award notice to said at least one supply chain entity, based upon results of said analyzing;

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the at least one supply chain entity that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by the manufacturing enterprise under an agreement with the at least one supply chain entity;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the at least one supply chain entity with

purchase prices available to the manufacturing enterprise for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the at least one supply chain entity incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the at least one supply chain entity to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise;

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the at least one supply chain entity, the authorization letter authorizing the at least one supply chain entity to purchase the component directly from the component supplier; and

tracking selected activities in a log;

wherein said processing said bill of material file includes associating physical attributes of components listed on said bill of material file with corresponding business attributes of said components; and wherein further said processing said bill of material file includes mapping items contained in said bill of material file from said manufacturing enterprise with items provided by external sources via said network.

146. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said items contained in said bill of material file include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

147. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said items provided by said external sources include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

148. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said external sources include:

a database of said manufacturing enterprise;

a data warehouse; and

a technical manual.

149. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes automatically transmitting notifications to an administrative entity of said manufacturing enterprise via said network.

150. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said analyzing said bid response includes comparing data contained in said bill of material file with data contained in said bid response.

151. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said supply chain entity is a contract manufacturer.

152. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said business attributes include a price masked component.

153. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said business attributes include a consignment component.

154. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said business attributes include a buy off contract.

155. (new) The method of claim 145, wherein said business attributes include a direct rebate plan.

156. (new) A storage medium with machine-readable computer program code for managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method, comprising:

loading a bill of material file into said computer network;

processing said bill of material file;

generating a bid request from said bill of material file;

transmitting said bid request to a web site;

receiving at least one bid response by said at least one supply chain entity;

analyzing said bid response;

generating an award notice;

transmitting said award notice to said at least one supply chain entity, based upon results of said analyzing;

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the at least one supply chain entity that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by the manufacturing enterprise under an agreement with the at least one supply chain entity;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the at least one supply chain entity with purchase prices available to the manufacturing enterprise for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the at least one supply chain entity incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the at least one supply chain entity to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise;

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the at least one supply chain entity, the authorization letter authorizing the at least one supply chain entity to purchase the component directly from the component supplier; and

tracking selected activities in a log.

157. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes mapping items contained in said bill of material file from said manufacturing enterprise with items provided by external sources via said network.

158. (new) The storage medium of claim 157, wherein said items contained in said bill of material file include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

159. (new) The storage medium of claim 157, wherein said items provided by said external sources include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

160. (new) The storage medium of claim 157, wherein said external sources include:

a database of said manufacturing enterprise;

a data warehouse; and

a technical manual.

161. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes automatically transmitting notifications to an administrative entity of said manufacturing enterprise via said network.

162. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein said network is an extranet.

163. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein said analyzing said bid response includes comparing data contained in said bill of material file with data contained in said bid response.

164. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein said supply chain entity is a contract manufacturer.

165. (new) The storage medium of claim 157, wherein the mapping includes mapping component information to at least one commodity.

166. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein the request comprises:

part numbers subject to authorization;

descriptions of the part numbers;

component volumes; and

contract price per unit.

167. (new) The storage medium of claim 156, wherein the affirmative response by the component supplier includes a notification indicating approval of the request.

168. (new) The storage medium of claim 164, wherein the authorization letter comprises an attachment comprising:

guidelines for the contract manufacturer to follow, comprising:

keeping pricing information confidential for a period of time;

the authorization is restricted to part numbers provided with the authorization letter; and

providing copies of purchase orders between the contract manufacturer and the component supplier to the buyer for tracking and reconciliation purposes; and

a request to provide a production bill of materials that factors in revisions to the purchase prices of components that reflect the purchase price available to the buyer.

169. (new) A storage medium with machine-readable computer program code for managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method, comprising:

loading a bill of material file into said computer network;

processing said bill of material file;

generating a bid request from said bill of material file;

transmitting said bid request to a web site;

receiving at least one bid response by said at least one supply chain entity;

analyzing said bid response;

generating an award notice;

transmitting said award notice to said at least one supply chain entity, based upon results of said analyzing;

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the at least one supply chain entity that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by the manufacturing enterprise under an agreement with the at least one supply chain entity;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the at least one supply chain entity with purchase prices available to the manufacturing enterprise for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the at least one supply chain entity incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the at least one supply chain entity to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise;

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the at least one supply chain entity, the authorization letter authorizing the at least one supply chain entity to purchase the component directly from the component supplier; and

tracking selected activities in a log;

wherein said processing said bill of material file includes associating physical attributes of components listed on said bill of material file with corresponding business attributes of said components; and wherein further said processing said bill of material file includes mapping items contained in said bill of material file from said manufacturing enterprise with items provided by external sources via said network.

170. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said items contained in said bill of material file include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

171. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said items provided by said external sources include:

at least one component number;

at least one component name;

at least one component description;

at least one component price; and

at least one component availability.

172. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said external sources include:

a database of said manufacturing enterprise;

a data warehouse; and

a technical manual.

173. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said processing said bill of material file includes automatically transmitting notifications to an administrative entity of said manufacturing enterprise via said network.

174. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said analyzing said bid response includes comparing data contained in said bill of material file with data contained in said bid response.

175. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said supply chain entity is a contract manufacturer.

176. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said business attributes include a price masked component.

177. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said business attributes include a consignment component.

178. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said business attributes include a buy off contract.

179. (new) The storage medium of claim 169, wherein said business attributes include a direct rebate plan.